

Message Text

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SUBJ: PROGRESSIVE PARTY DEFIES GOVERNMENT BY INVITING
BLACK SPEAKERS

REF: PRETORIA 3039

1. SUMMARY: THERE WAS NAUGHT FOR PRIME MINISTER'S COMFORT IN ADDRESSES TO PROGRESSIVE PARTY'S THIRTEENTH NATIONAL CONGRESS IN DURBAN SEPTEMBER 3-4 BY FOUR BLACK HOMELAND LEADERS ESPECIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND AS "OBSERVERS" DESPITE PRIME MINISTER'S THREATS ONLY SHORT TIME BEFORE (REFTEL). FOUR SPEAKERS, JUDICIOUSLY SPACED OVER TWO DAY MEETING, WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR ADAMANT REJECTION OF NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT'S RACIAL POLICIES, IN THEIR FIRM DEMANDS FOR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL CITIZENS IRRESPECTIVE OF COLOR AND THEIR NONE-TOO-SUBTLE HINTS OF IMPENDING DISASTER IF SOUTH AFRICAN WHITES REFUSED FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN NEAR FUTURE. ALL WERE ACCORDED STANDING OVATIONS BY ENTHUSIASTIC DELEGATES AND THEIR SPEECHES HIGHLIGHTED WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN ROUTINE PARTY CONGRESS.

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2. COLLINS RAMUSSI, DEPTY LEADER OF LEBOWA, LED FOUR

HOMELAND SPEAKERS WITH SLASHING ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT'S APARTHEID POLICIES, DEMAND FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF SUCH "TRUE LEADERS" AS NELSON MANDELA AND WALTER SIZULU AND REFUSAL CONDEMN TERRORIST ACTIVITY: "DO WHITE PEOPLE ACTUALLY EXPECT US TO RESENT TERRORISTS WHEN THEY COME? WHEN THE TERRORISTS STRIKE...MUST WE NOT HELP THEM?" PROFESSOR NTSANWISI OF GAZANKULU INSISTED THAT HOUR OR DECISION HAD ARRIVED, THAT DECISIONS MUST HENCEFORTH BE MADE JOINTLY BY WHITES AND BLACKS TOGETHER AND THAT POINT HAD BEEN REACHED WHERE CONTINUED SECURITY OF WHITES NOW IN HANDS OF SA BLACKS. M.T. MOLATHLAWA OF BAPHUTHATSWANA, AS DID THE OTHER BLACK SPEAKERS, WARMLY PRAISED PROGRESSIVE PARTY FOR ITS EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF NON-WHITES BUT WARNED THAT AFRICANS WERE FAST LOSING CONFIDENCE IN WHITE MAN. CHIEF BUTHELEZI OF KWAZULU, IN MOST MODERATE OF FOUR SPEECHES, USED PLATFORM AFFORDED HIM TO PUT FORWARD IMPORTANT NEW PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION IN HOMELAND CONSTITUTIONS, AND EVENTUALLY IN SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION, OF BILL OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS BASED ON UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. SUCH CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS, "PLACED BEYOND REACH OF FLEETING MAJORITIES, PASSING CONTINGENCIES AND EVER-CHANGING IDIOSYNCRACIES", WOULD BE A NEW DEPARTURE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA AND, INDEED, FOR MUCH OF AFRICA HE SAID. HE HOPED IT WOULD HELP ALLAY FEARS OF MINORITY GROUPS, "ESPECIALLY THE WHITE MINORITY", AND PROMISED TO DO ALL IN HIS POWER TO BRING IT ABOUT.

3. REMAINDER OF CONGRESS WAS DEVOTED TO PASSAGE OF NUMEROUS RATHER ROUTINE RESOLUTIONS. THEY REFLECTED NO CHANGES IN PARTY POLICY. AS EXPECTED, COLIN EGLIN WAS RELECTED PARTY LEADER, AND RAY SWART WAS PROMOTED TO NATIONAL CHAIRMAN TO SUCCEED LATE HARRY LAWRENCE.

4. COMMENT: IT WAS EVIDENT NEITHER PROGRESSIVE PARTY NOR FOUR HOMELAND SPEAKERS WERE IN ANY WAY COWED BY PRIME MINISTER'S BLUNT WARNING IN HIS AUGUST 24 PRESS CONFERENCE (REFTEL). BLACK SPEAKERS PULLED NO PUNCHES IN THEIR ADDRESSES, WHICH WERE ENTHUSIASTICALLY APPLAUDED BY OVER 300 DELEGATES. ALTHOUGH PARTY SEEMED PLEAUED IN HAVING TAKEN PLUNGE AND SPONSORED OPEN MULTI-RACIAL MEETING FOR FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS, SPEAKER AFTER SPEAKER MADE CLEAR THAT REASON WAS URGENT NEED FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DIALOGUE ACROSS RACIAL LINES RATHER THAN DEFIANCE OF GOVERNMENT PER SE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER GOVERNMENT WILL PICK UP GAUNTLET SO RUDELY CAST BEFORE IT.
HOLMES

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